

What Do Infant Mental Health Specialists Do?

Infant mental health specialists often work with vulnerable children whose development is at risk due to the following factors:

- Parental mental health problems
- Poverty and homelessness
- Absence of social supports
- Parental substance abuse
- Child abuse and neglect

Clinicians provide services usually in the family home, but services can also be provided through schools, hospitals, outpatient clinics, and physicians' offices. Not all infant mental health specialists provide therapeutic services. Some conduct research on effective prevention and early intervention programs, or how different environments influence children's mental health. Others work for child advocacy programs.



MERRILL PALMER
SKILLMAN INSTITUTE
for Child & Family Development



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Infant Mental Health Dual-Title Program



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The Nation's First
Dual-Title Program in
Infant Mental Health

Balances Research
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Aligned with
Competency Guidelines
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Full Academic
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What is Infant Mental Health?

Infant mental health is a multi-disciplinary field focused on the social and emotional development of infants and young children. Infant mental health specialists work with parents and infants together to help the parent learn more about his or her baby's development, to refer the family to other helpful community resources, and to help parents improve their ability for self-observation and reflection.

While infant mental health practitioners represent a variety of disciplines –like social work, psychology, early childhood education, special education, nursing, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, social policy, and physical therapy – they share common beliefs about working with infants and families. These beliefs include:

- Development occurs in the context of nurturing relationships
- The birth of a baby offers the hopefulness of a new relationship and the possibility for growth and change
- Parents want what is best for their babies
- Early attachment relationships serve as prototypes for later relationships and healthy development
- The development of a healthy attachment relationship may be disturbed or interrupted by parental histories of unresolved losses or traumatic events (from the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health).



WSU Infant Mental Health Dual-Title Degree Program

Wayne State University's Dual-Title degree in IMH offers specialized clinical and research training with full integration of infant mental health theory, assessment, treatment and practice throughout the student's major program. Students working toward advanced degrees in Social Work, Education and Nursing are eligible to obtain this dual-title degree.

The IMH Dual-Title degree is aligned with guidelines established for infant mental health programs and is based on competencies established by the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health (MI-AIMH, 2000, 2003). Masters students in the IMH Dual-Title degree program must complete their advanced year field placement in infant mental health, plus 14 credits of coursework; 12 in classroom courses, and 2 in an infant mental health seminar completed during fieldwork. Doctoral students must integrate infant mental health into their Qualifying Exams, theses and dissertations. They also must complete 12 credits of coursework in classroom courses.

COURSES

Visit Our Website to Learn More: www.mpsi.wayne.edu

- Infant Mental Health: Theory to Practice Across Early Childhood Settings*
- Infant and Family Mental Health Assessment*
- Infant Mental Health Practice*
- Psychology of Infant Behavior and Development
- Developmental Assessment of Infants and Toddlers

* CORE COURSE

Description of Core Courses

ELE 7025 Infant Mental Health: Theory to Practice Across Early Childhood Settings

Provides the student with theories of infant mental health and research-based information on infant mental health practices applied to various early childhood settings. Interdisciplinary, relationship-based interventions to promote development and learning in infants and young children will be emphasized through course readings, activities, assignments and lectures.

NUR 7880 Infant and Family Mental Health Assessment

An overview of both formal and informal assessment methods used to assess infant social-emotional development, parent mental health and parent-infant relationships from the attachment perspective. Students will become familiar with assessment methods through lecture, video and practical use.

SW 7010 Infant Mental Health Practice

Focuses on the relationship between theory, assessment and practice in the field of infant mental health with specific focus on evidence-based interventions used by infant mental health specialists working with infants and families.